

Minutes of the East Greenwich School Committee

Tuesday, December 20, 2016

Archie R. Cole Middle School Library

100 Cedar Avenue

East Greenwich, RI 02818

6:00 p.m. Executive Session, Mrs. Winters made a motion to go into executive session for discussion and/or action regarding those items of business exempt from open meetings under Rhode Island General Laws §42-46-4 and §42-46-5 (a) (2) Teacher Negotiations. Dr. Sun seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Those in attendance were Ms. Carolyn Mark, Chair; Mrs. Mary Ellen Winters, Vice-Chair; Mr. Matt Plain; Mr. Michael Fain; Mr. Jeff Dronzek; Dr. Lori McEwen; and Dr. Yan Sun. Dr. Victor Mercurio, Superintendent; Mrs. Gail Wilcox, Director of Administration; and Mr. Bradley Wilson, Director of Student Services were also in attendance.

7:00 p.m. Regular Meeting

I. Call to Order

Ms. Mark called the meeting to order at 7:21 p.m. During the meeting it was announced a vote was taken in executive session in support of the motion (vote 5-2).

II. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

The meeting commenced with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Ms. Mark called for a moment of silence for past superintendent Charlie Meyers.

III. Public Comments

Approximately twenty-four EG teachers signed up to speak during public comment. Ms. Mark asked all to limit their comment to two minutes. She called each teacher to the podium. The following comments were addressed to the Committee:

Mr. Greg DeCubellis, EGHS teacher, asked how the start time initiative touted as cost neutral wound up costing several tens of thousands of dollars in overruns. He asked if it was because the Committee ignored Superintendent Mercurio's recommendation to delay the start time initiative, whether they failed to perform fiscal analysis, or if variance reports created by the fiscal office were ignored, which might have projected the shortfall.

Mr. Chris Boie, EGHS teacher, commended the Committee for their June 14, 2016 FTM presentation with the Town where they stated a primary goal and responsibility is to "maintain a valuable and talented workforce with a competitive salary structure while protecting the quality of the school system in difficult economic times."

Ms. Melissa Fallow, EGHS teacher, asked if the Committee considered the implementation of another tier of busing to accommodate later start times.

Ms. Raquel Casanova, EGHS teacher, noted concern about the school start times and asked if the Committee realized another tier of busing would require the Committee to pay for buses and drivers for the later start time.

Ms. Shelley Avarista, EGHS teacher, asked if the Committee made a claim that the initiative would be cost neutral, which implies money in the current budget would fund the initiative so busing would not be a drain on the budget.

Ms. Joanne Gilden, EGHS teacher, expressed concerns about the later start time and asked if the Committee looked into how they would fund the additional expense since costs are significantly higher than the budgeted amount.

Ms. Dana Doucette, Frenchtown teacher, expressed concerns with the change in start time. She asked if the Committee made a claim that the busing would be cost neutral. However after researching, it was discovered it would not be cost neutral. If so, why would the Committee proceed with such a plan when it would be a burden on the taxpayers and the effective operation of the school year.

Ms. Heather Palmer, Hanaford teacher, asked if the community is aware that previous Chairman Green stated the change would not be cost neutral.

Ms. Monica Jennings, Hanaford teacher, asked if Chairman Green understood the change would cost money, why would he encourage the School Committee to proceed. She said it shows the Committee not being fiscally prudent, another goal stated by the Committee at the FTM in June.

Mr. Mike Penza, EGHS teacher, said Mrs. Winters voted against the plan because she wanted to investigate the general and financial implications of the change. He asked if that information should have been available to taxpayers and the rest of the Committee.

Ms. Beth Gorter, Hanaford teacher, asked if the Committee ignored the advice of Dr. Mercurio, who warned against changing the start time. She said he is the one person most familiar and deeply involved who warned against the financial burden of changing the start time.

Ms. Renee Haskins, Meadowbrook teacher, noted the August 20, 2016 Providence Journal quoted the School Committee saying more buses were needed and more money was found. She asked if taxpayers should know where the money was found and if found, shouldn't the district have more than enough money to operate.

Ms. Fran Healy, EGHS teacher, expressed concerns about start time. She said if money was found, shouldn't taxpayers be confused. She also asked why the current budget is frozen and elementary school libraries can't purchase books.

Ms. Erin Newman, EGHS teacher, asked if the Committee acknowledges these are difficult times, how does initiating a program that is not cost neutral and burdens taxpayers meet the Committee's goals?

Mr. Steve Levesque, EGHS teacher, said the cost for transportation was projected at \$90,000 and the actual line cost is \$200,000.

Ms. Anne Marie Flaherty, EGHS teacher, asked if the current line item is \$200,000 to date, won't the deficit increase further due to bussing impact due to start time change.

Ms. Christina O'Day, EGHS teacher, expressed concerns that the change in start times is saddling taxpayers with a 1.4 million deficit even with a 2% increase in funding next year.

Ms. Sharon Foley, District wide social worker, noted concerns with the start time and asked if part of the deficit is due to ignoring the advice of the superintendent who warned not to tackle two initiatives (all day kindergarten and start times) at one time.

Ms. Nancy Bucci, EGHS teacher, said the current budget has allocated \$6.6 million to service the town's debt. \$5 million is attributed to the schools. She asked if the objective is to "kick the can down the road" to fund the structural deficit created.

Ms. Mary Ellen Flanagan, EGHS teacher, said Chairwoman Mark asserted in May 2015 that she didn't want to see the school district create a structural deficit. She asked if that's what's happening now.

Ms. Marta Chace, EGHS teacher and resident, expressed concern about start time and noted taxpayers are laden with a significant burden. She asked if taxpayers are aware that significant funds were removed from reserve to fund the offset of the later time. She also questioned whether this could hurt the town's bond rating.

Ms. Holly Eaves, EGHS teacher, asked if taxpayers are aware of how the bus schedule has burdened the town with a \$1.4 million deficit due to the a lack of foresight and mismanagement of funds.

Ms. Amanda Kingma, Hanaford teacher, said if the current line to date is \$200,000 and the deficit will increase due to the initiative, do taxpayers know of this unnecessary burden to the town.

Ms. Denise Champney, Speech Pathologist, expressed concerns

about the start time change. She asked if the Committee felt it wise to proceed with a program that will saddle the district and unnecessarily burden the taxpayers. She asked if the initiative should have been rejected in the first place due to the fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayers.

Ms. Mark thanked all for expressing their concerns. She expressed concern that there is misinformation about the scope/scale of impact. She welcomes an opportunity in the future to provide clarification.

IV. Approval of Minutes

a. Regular and executive for December 6, 2016

On a motion by Mr. Plain, which was seconded by Mr. Fain, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve the regular and executive minutes.

V. Superintendent's Report

a. Joint TC/SC 12/14/16 meeting review

Dr. Mercurio expressed deepest sympathy to Charlie Meyer's family. He said it has been an honor and privilege to follow Mr. Meyer as superintendent. A memorial service will be held in Rhode Island in the spring. Details will be shared when available.

The first joint meeting with the Town Council was held last week. The next meeting is scheduled for January 9, 2017 at Swift Community Center. Last week, GoLocalProv published an article regarding health inspections at three East Greenwich schools. All infractions are taken seriously and corrected immediately with Aramark and Mr. Wilmarth. The priority is to ensure the health and

safety of the students.

b. Revised certification requirements effective 1/1/17

As of January 1, 2017, coaches, substitute teachers, and substitute school nurse teachers will no longer need certification through RIDE. Coaches will still need to complete the appropriate CPR certification and follow the RILL guidelines. Substitute teachers will need a bachelor degree or higher to substitute. School Nurse Teacher substitutes will need to have their RN license.

VI. School Committee Concerns

Ms. Mark stated that this item would be changed to include pending matters/future agenda items suggested by School Committee members. This item will be moved to the end of the agenda.

VII. Action Items

a. Parental leave-Ellen Garcia-Teacher-Meadowbrook

On a motion by Mr. Fain, which was seconded by Mrs. Winters, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve the parental leave.

b. Home School Approvals

1. Grade 5

2. Grade 7

On a motion by Dr. McEwen, which was seconded by Mr. Fain, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve the two home school requests.

c. School Committee Meeting Dates for 2017

Mr. Dronzek noted the public hearing on the town budget is scheduled for April 10th, which is Passover. Dr. Mercurio suggested changing the date to April 25th, but will confirm with the town manager. On a motion by Dr. McEwen, which was seconded by Mr.

Plain, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve the dates pending the change to the

April 10th meeting.

d. Approval of architect- Phase II

On a motion by Mrs. Winters, which was seconded by Dr. Sun, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve Saccoccio & Associates as the architect for phase II.

e. RFP – Bus Transportation

On a motion by Mr. Dronzek, which was seconded by Mr. Fain, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve the bid pending corrections and updates. Dr. Mercurio thanked Mr. Potorski, Mrs. Musella, and Dr. Williams for their assistance in revising the RFP.

f. Resignation: Jeff Dronzek as public member of Finance Committee

On a motion by Mr. Fain, which was seconded by Mr. Plain, the Committee voted 7-0 to accept the resignation.

g. Approval of Title 16-2-9.1 School Committees and Superintendents-Code of basic management principles and ethical school standards

Ms. Mark read the code of basic management principles and ethical school standards. It was suggested to her (recently) that the Committee formally adopt title 16-2-9.1 each time an organizational meeting takes place (every two years). This practice will allow members to commit/recommit to 16-2-9.1. On a motion by Mrs. Winters, which was seconded by Dr. Sun, the Committee voted 7-0 to formally approve 16-2-9.1.

VIII. Advisory/Subcommittee Updates

a. SEAC

Ms. Harwood summarized the last SEAC meeting that took place on December 7th.

Various subcommittees were formed: social committee, dyslexia, data, education, etc. The dyslexia subcommittee has met a few times and has crafted a mission statement and charge. The parent education subcommittee is planning to schedule two parent workshops in the future. The data subcommittee is reviewing PARCC data and shared information at the last administrative council meeting. SEAC is looking to create their own website or create a page linked to the EGSD website. Mr. Wilson also gave an update on budget concerns and encouraged parents to participate in budget workshops for special education.

b. Transportation Subcommittee

Mr. Dronzek thanked the transportation subcommittee for assisting with the RFP revision. The next meeting is scheduled for January 4, 2017. The committee will review the transportation policy in regards to walking distances and make recommendations to the policy committee. Sargent Carter will be invited to the meeting to evaluate safety concerns.

c. Personnel Committee

Dr. McEwen summarized the meeting that took place yesterday. The committee will review all policies in the Personnel series. Committee members were assigned policies. Mrs. Winters will take the lead on #5110 job descriptions. New language has been proposed for #5120

Acknowledgement of Faithful Service. A table of contents will be drafted for the personnel manual. There was also discussion about the superintendent evaluation process. The group is scheduled to meet again on February 9, 2017.

d. Finance Committee

Mr. Dronzek stated there are two openings for community members on the Finance Committee. Individual school list serves, district list serv, and the superintendent's field memo will be used to solicit members. Interested parties will be asked to send a letter of interest to the superintendent. The positions will be open until filled. Interested parties will go for approval at the January 10th School Committee meeting. The Finance Committee reviewed the transportation RFP, discussed the budget deficit, and also discussed the upcoming budget workshops.

IX. Discussion

a. Teaching and Learning: EGHS Program of Studies (POS) 2016-17

Mr. Podraza presented the changes to the program of studies for 2016-17. He discussed the AP Capstone Diploma, which includes two new courses: AP Seminar for 2017-18 and AP Research 2018-2019. A five-day professional development workshop is necessary for the teacher of record for AP Capstone. Mr. Podraza will investigate using Title Two funds. Outreach to students will begin in January.

The POS has a new format/layout and includes new course descriptions, which emphasize school-wide expectations using

symbols. Grade descriptors are being changed to reflect proficiency demonstrated by student achievement and communicated by the cumulative final mark. Consistency with banding of grades will start with the class of 2021 (i.e., A+, A, A-). GPA changes will begin in SY17-18 for the class of 2021 only. Participation in state testing will be required (for a diploma) for the class of 2021.

Mr. Podraza thanked the EGHS leadership team for all of their assistance. The POS will go for approval at the January 10th School Committee meeting.

X. Adjournment

On a motion by Mrs. Winters, which was seconded by Mr. Plain, the Committee voted 7-0 to adjourn at 9:15 p.m.

**CHRISTINE DIMEGLIO
SECRETARY**